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A/AC.159/SR.412
21 May 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 412th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 18 May 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The CHAIRMAN* declared the session open. He recalled that, in its resolution 46/49, the General Assembly had decided that the Conference on the Indian Ocean should be structured in more than one stage and that the first stage of the Conference should be convened in 1993 or as soon as possible. It had also decided that the Ad Hoc Committee should hold a session of five working days in 1992 to perform its preparatory functions for the various stages envisaged for the Conference.

2. The Bureau of the Ad Hoc Committee had met on three occasions to consider the organization of work for the session and had outlined some of the questions which the Committee might want to consider in preparation for the first stage of the Conference. Those included the duration and dates of the Conference, the allocation of seats to the respective geographical regions in the General Committee, the number of Main Committees and working groups to be established, the duration of the general debate and of meetings of Main Committees and working groups, and the allocation of agenda items.

3. The Bureau had also discussed practical aspects of convening the first stage of the Conference in accordance with the provisions of resolution 46/49, with particular reference to the General Assembly's call "for the full and active participation in the Conference of permanent members of the Security Council and major maritime users of the Indian Ocean". In considering the question, the Bureau had borne in mind that three permanent members of the Security Council had withdrawn from the Ad Hoc Committee and that several major maritime users of the Indian Ocean, who were members of the Ad Hoc Committee, had not taken part in its work at the previous two sessions. The Bureau had felt that it would be useful to ascertain the views of the countries concerned regarding their participation in the first stage of the Conference and it had therefore asked him to hold consultations on the matter. During those consultations, three permanent members of the Security Council and some of the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean had said that they would not find it possible to participate in a Conference based on the 1971 Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, which in their view had been overtaken by the positive developments in international political relations. However, some countries had indicated that they would be willing to consider any new approaches and practical steps towards the achievement of the goal of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean.

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* The full text of the Chairman's statement will be issued as document A/AC.159/L.116.

(The Chairman)

4. It was clear that the full participation of the permament members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean called for in General Assembly resolution 46/49 would not be served and the Ad Hoc Committee therefore needed to give the situation careful consideration. In that connection, he wished to emphasize the importance the Ad Hoc Committee attached to the convening of the Conference, despite the difficulties which might be involved.

5. Mr. CURE (Mauritius) requested that, in view of the importance of the information it contained, the Chairman's statement should be published as an official document of the Ad Hoc Committee.

6. The CHAIRMAN said he would take it that the Ad Hoc Committee wished him to ask the Secretariat to have his statement published as an official document.

7. It was so decided.

ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIRMEN

8. The CHAIRMAN said that it was necessary to elect a Vice-Chairman to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Mr. Isslamet Poernomo (Indonesia), who had been the Vice-Chairman from the Group of Asian States. He had been informed by the Permanent Mission of Indonesia that Mr. Jusuf was a candidate for that post. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Ad Hoc Committee wished to elect Mr. Jusuf by acclamation.

9. It was so decided.

10. The CHAIRMAN said that, with regard to the other two vacancies, namely for a Vice-Chairman from the Group of Western European and Other States to fill the vacancy created by the departure of Miss Jill Courtney (Australia) and a Vice-Chairman from the Group of Eastern European States, letters had been sent to the Chairmen of the two regional groups concerned requesting them to submit nominations, but so far no replies had been received. However, he had received a letter from the Permanent Representative of Australia saying that Australia would not be seeking to fill the vice-chairman's position.

11. Mr. JUSUF (Indonesia) thanked the Ad Hoc Committee for the confidence it had expressed in his country by electing him Vice-Chairman. His delegation attached great importance to the preparatory work for the Conference and had hoped that the improved international climate would provide renewed impetus. However, the decision by certain countries to withdraw was a disturbing development and he appealed to those concerned to reconsider their position and to rejoin the Ad Hoc Committee. Further postponement of the Conference was in no one's interest, and his country was firmly committed to holding the Conference at the earliest possible moment in order to achieve the central objective of the Declaration.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (A/AC.159/L.115)

12. The agenda was adopted.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

13. The CHAIRMAN gave details of the proposed programme of work and said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Ad Hoc Committee wished to adopt it.

14. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.25 a.m.

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22 May 1992

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 413th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 18 May 1992 at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

CONTENTS

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/49 (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.30 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46/49 (continued)

1. Mr. BUTLER (Australia) said that the Committee had five more days in which to determine whether it could revive itself and find new energy and direction for its work after 20 years. The task would be difficult, but the deadline should be taken as a challenge.

2. Resolution 2832 (XXVI) of 16 December 1971 containing the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, was the constitutional document for the work of the Committee, and contained principles of very great importance which did not need to be repudiated or amended. It would be avoiding the facts of history, however, if the Committee refused to see that political change over the past 20 years, and even the past two or three years, required a corresponding change in its approach. The basic mandate of 1971 had been overtaken by subsequent events and must be adapted. If the Committee failed to initiate a new approach at the current session, a significant opportunity would be lost. Some Committee members had indeed withdrawn, but none of those members or of the current members had condemned the basic idea of the Declaration. Given the central facts that time was limited, that account must be taken of change, and that no one opposed the concept of the zone of peace, the Committee must be given new life. It was no secret that his own Government had considered withdrawing, but had remained a member of the Committee to underline the sincerity of its wish for it to find new energy and direction.

3. A first step towards revitalization would be to take up the Chairman's proposal to work through the operative paragraphs of resolution 46/49 one by one, considering them from the point of view of implementation and of the underlying concept of each paragraph. The next step could be a discussion of the Declaration to determine what new mandate might be required in order to give the Committee new life and direction.

4. Paragraph 8 of resolution 46/49 referred to the roles of the permanent members of the Security Council and major maritime users. Perhaps a series of regional conferences among the various groups concerned could serve as building blocks leading up to the conference as a whole. In seeking ways to implement the Declaration, replacing the Cold War stance with such an approach would represent a fundamental change in concept.

5. Mr. GOONETILLEKE (Sri Lanka) said that his delegation had noted with concern that neither the Group of Eastern European States nor the Group of Western European and other States was currently represented on the Bureau, and hoped that those regional groups would soon nominate representatives to Bureau positions. The outcome of consultations with the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean who had left the Committee was also of concern. Those members held the view that the 1971 Declaration had been overtaken by positive developments and that great Power

(Mr. Goonetilleke, Sri Lanka)

rivalries no longer existed in the Indian Ocean. That did not exclude the possibility of future rivalries in that region, however. No delegation would subscribe to the theory that the current world order would continue indefinitely. The justification found in the 1970s for establishing a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean still existed. The States of the region should not become complacent and should equip themselves to face global change, since the Indian Ocean had always been strategically important.

6. The Chairman had said at the previous meeting that some members who had withdrawn might not be adverse to considering new approaches to achieve the goal of a zone of peace. The Committee should keep in mind, however, that it must function in accordance with the mandate given by the General Assembly. In the view of his delegation, the goal was to establish a zone of peace where the peoples of the littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean could preserve their independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity and could resolve their political, social and economic problems under conditions of peace and tranquility without direct or indirect involvement in rivalries among extra-regional Powers. Proponents of new ideas should take part in the proceedings of the Committee, which would give serious consideration to any reasonable proposal.

7. Resolution 46/49 called for convening the first stage of the Conference at Colombo in 1993, or as soon as possible, but the Chairman's consultations had made it evident that it was not possible for the Conference to take place as mandated in the foreseeable future. Though the Committee had completed the major part of the organizational work for the Conference, it was apparent that it could not be held without full participation of the permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users. His delegation considered the Conference a tool to achieve the objective of the establishment of a zone of peace in the Indian Ocean, a cherished goal of the littoral and hinterland States for over 20 years. Sri Lanka continued to hold the view that its establishment would make a significant contribution to international peace and security, and hoped that the extra-regional Powers would respect the sentiments of those peoples.

8. Mr. JAIN (India) said that since the adoption of the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace, the world had witnessed positive and far-reaching developments. Rather than detracting from the validity of the Declaration, however, those developments served to encourage littoral States to continue working towards the objective of making the Indian Ocean a true zone of peace. The principal mechanism for making that concept a reality was a process of consultations between littoral and hinterland States of the Indian Ocean on the one hand and the great Powers, permament members of the Security Council and major maritime users on the other. Only as a result of such consultation would international agreement emerge for the maintenance of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace; therefore, full participation and cooperation of the major Powers and maritime users were essential. His

(Mr. Jain, India)

delegation shared the disappointment at the withdrawal of such participation and cooperation.

9. His delegation also shared the satisfaction at the successful completion of the preparatory work for the first stage of the Conference and looked forward to constructive cooperation with other members at the current session. It was also conscious of the concern about the prospects for the next stage in the Committee's work.

10. The Committee was not required by its mandate to include in its conclusions and recommendations a draft resolution for consideration by the General Assembly. Since it had experienced difficulty at recent sessions in achieving consensus on a draft resolution, it might be more appropriate and politically prudent to attempt such a draft resolution closer to the time of the First Committee session, which would allow any developments during the intervening period to be taken into consideration.

11. Mr. CURE (Mauritius) said that at such a critical time in the Committee's deliberations, it might be helpful to conduct informal consultations, which would permit a more open exchange of views. He was concerned about the effect on the Committee if no solution was achieved at the current session.

12. The CHAIRMAN said that the fact that the Committee was holding a formal meeting should not necessarily inhibit a constructive exchange of views. He invited comments on the suggestion by the representative of Australia that the Committee should examine the operative paragraphs of resolution 46/49 one by one.

13. Mr. JAIN (India) said that his delegation was as concerned as all others to make progress, and to that end he felt that the proposal made by Mauritius deserved more careful consideration. Informal consultations would make it possible for the delegations to engage in a freer and perhaps more productive discussion. Furthermore, the mandate of the Ad Hoc Committee was defined in only one paragraph, paragraph 12, of resolution 46/49, which directed the Committee to perform its preparatory functions for the Conference. Some paragraphs were not directly relevant to the Committee's work, and some were directed elsewhere, such as paragraph 9, which was a request to the Secretary-General. In consequence, he was not sure whether the Ad Hoc Committee was competent to start an analysis of resolution 46/49.

14. Mr. BUTLER (Australia) recalled that he had already made an informal proposal for a methodology by which the Committee could proceed. As the Chairman and the representative of India had pointed out, the Committee had a clear mandate to report to the General Assembly on the implementation of resolution 46/49. Paragraph 12 of that resolution provided an umbrella under which many things called for in other operative paragraphs could be considered. It mandated the Committee to perform its "preparatory functions" for the Conference, and those preparatory functions were largely found in

(Mr. Butler, Australia)

paragraphs 3 to 8. Paragraph 3, for example, mandated that the Conference should be held, and paragraph 5 stated that it should be structured in more than one stage. Approaching the organization of the Conference in that way might well relate to the proposal he had made earlier of working with subregional building blocks. If the Committee were to discuss such an approach, it would in fact be discussing the implementation of paragraph 5. Such a discussion was likely to lead, in turn, to a more conceptual discussion of the issues facing the Committee, as he had also proposed earlier in the meeting.

15. He felt that the suggestion of the representative of Mauritius, to hold informal consultations, was a useful one.

16. Mr. SHA Zukang (China) said his delegation supported the suggestion of the representative of Mauritius, and also agreed with the views expressed by the representative of Australia. Many things could be subsumed under the notion of the preparatory work for the Conference. First, there was the issue of the status of the Ad Hoc Committee. As had already been said, the preparatory work for the Conference had already been completed once and he sought clarification on the relationship of the work that it was proposed to undertake in the current meetings to that completed the previous year. Another issue was that of participation. Paragraph 8 of resolution 46/49 described the participation in the Conference of the permanent members of the Security Council and of the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean as "essential", but the question was what the Ad Hoc Committee was to do if either of those two groups decided not to participate. A third issue was whether the 1971 Declaration was still relevant and valid. He agreed with the representative of Australia that it was a very important historical document, and that there was no question of amending or repudiating it, but the world situation had changed. The Committee had to consider the implications of that change, but they also had to recall, as the representative of Sri Lanka had pointed out, that the situation might well change once again. A fourth issue was that of the continued existence of the Ad Hoc Committee itself. He agreed with the representative of Australia that the Committee was at a crucial juncture, and that there was a need to resuscitate it, as it had an essential role to play in the establishment of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace. He hoped that the Committee could address those four issues squarely, openly, and without concealing matters in diplomatic language.

17. Mr. HASSAN (Sudan) said that to follow the suggestion of the representative of Australia and analyse resolution 46/49 paragraph by paragraph from the implementation and conceptual points of view might result in conclusions which would call into question the standing of the resolution adopted by the General Assembly. The Committee's mandate was to press ahead with the preparations for the Conference, as stated in paragraph 12. He wished that the representative of Australia had given more explanation of why he felt such an analysis was necessary. He shared the view of the representative of Sri Lanka that even if many of the tensions which had been

(Mr. Hassan, Sudan)

behind the 1971 Declaration were no longer present, there was no guarantee that the situation would not change back again, and supported the proposal of the representative of Mauritius that the Committee should undertake informal consultations.

18. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the meeting be suspended so that informal consultations could take place.

19. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.

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AD HOC COMMITTEE ON THE INDIAN OCEAN

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 414th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 19 May 1992, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka)

CONTENTS

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/49 (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 46/49 (continued)

1. The CHAIRMAN suggested that, since no delegation wished to take the floor, the Committee should adjourn the meeting in order to hold informal consultations.

2. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 10.55 a.m.